

SEARCHING FOR THE INFLUENTIALS OCCURRING IN THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF SPORTS CLUB GROUPS

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(Received November 14th, 1981)

The present study was designed, on the basis of a case method, to identify characteristics of the students who were the influentials (influential persons who maintain involvement in a certain activity) of sports club activities, especially occurring in initiating decisions to engage in club sport, and to describe relationship between them and the receivers of such influence. Data were obtained by means of a questionnaire filled out by each enrollee after he took part in the sports club held at Fukui Medical School, a newly-established school in 1980.

The data show that the concentration of club sports leadership is among the students whose sports life in the high school days was supported by club service. And it may be inferred that the influentials of this sports life type satisfy not only their own stratum's leadership needs but are attractive as sources of influence to members of other strata as well. Predisposition to club sport activity, choice status as a sportsmate and emotional expansiveness for sportsmates are sufficiently important to be determinants of influential's identity, too. In addition, demand for club sports leadership increases with the less active sections of the clients(students).

INTRODUCTION

When discussing, from a strategical point of view of business management, how to exploit the goods and deliver the service, the study of clients, customers or consumers will provide the administrator with important information upon which to effect the social performance. In the scope of physical education and athletics, the word "client" is used by Zeigler(1975). The clients are basically the recipients of services of physical education, sport or recreation, and form a network as an immediate environment of the administrator.

In the previous study(Yamashita, 1977), it was revealed that the effect of mouth-to--mouth communications was particularly great in the final stage of the public relations where

people determine to leap over the gap between passive information and active behavior. Such findings suggest that the response of a client to a sport service cannot be accounted for without reference to the character of his interpersonal relations. Therefore, in order to improve the management of sport service, it is necessary to attempt to specify exactly which elements of person-to-person interaction may be relevant for behavior of clients. And besides, it promises to contribute to more realistic formulation of a model for the study of sport behavior.

Katz and Lazarsfeld(1955) have analyzed in great detail how various informal channels of communication interact with the mass media to shape opinions, attitudes, and behavior. Of particular interest is their discussion of "opinion leader," those individuals whose life-cycle, social status, and gregariousness make them especially influential in the informal communication networks of a community. The procedure of analysis found in their study can be applied to the major themes we want to pursue. So far, the present writer has also put the procedure to use in order to try to outline the influential persons who maintain involvement in a sport activity.

According to the data taken from the inquiry on intramural sports programs(Yamashita,1981), there is an indication that the habitual exercisers are more likely to function as the leading members of the group of clients and that the influence flows from them to the less active sections of the clients. It may be, however, that the role of someone who is participating regularly in physical activity more often plays the role of originator or transmitter than influential, because it seems reasonable to infer that the advice circulations within the same sports life strata are more important as a determinant of sport involvement. If it is hypothesized that the decision-making for what is originated or transmitted may be influenced by someone else, it will be important to determine what more persuasive leaders look like and how they can be distinguished from those whom they lead.

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics of the students who were the influentials in initiating decisions to engage in club sport and to describe relationship between them and the receivers of such influence. During recent years, sports clubs have experienced rapid growth and development not only in school but community. Club service is considered primarily to organize groups for physical activities and, to that end, its clients must always be grasped within the context of the groups to which they belong or which they have in mind. Thus it is convenient to incorporate a concern with interpersonal relations into the research design. That is why a case of sports club groups was taken up in the present study.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This study employed the incident approach to club service. The research being reported was conducted at Fukui Medical School, a newly-established school in 1980. The research technique used in gathering the data for the study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent in the autumn of 1980 to 101 students, including 12 female students. The questionnaires were returned by all students.

If the process in which clients can be induced toward club service is dependent on interpersonal relations, it is necessary to know much more about the actual distribution of sociometric connections among them. For that purpose, a large number of data on concrete situations where the clients made a decision to entrance into a sports club should be collected. The author happened at the newly-established school where many sports clubs were formed at a time, and could take an opportunity for collecting the data in this specific incident. On a quasi-sociometric questionnaire, each enrollee of each sports club group was asked to designate the leading students.

The procedures of analysis performed on the data, more or less, can be seen in *the Decatur study* (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). In addition, it has been decided to employ five factors in terms of which the members of the given sample may be differentiated, and which may serve as frameworks in terms of which the flow of interpersonal influence can be described. These five factors are: sports life in the high school days, predisposition to club sport activity, gregariousness, choice status as a sportsmate, and emotional expansiveness for sportsmates.

It has been assumed that sports life type is more important factor than anything else. In pursuing physical education and sport service, analysis of human behavior which is considered to be the core of physical activity may promote theoretical development. From this standpoint, Udo (1972) classified types of participant (defined as a concept similar to client) as C, P, A and S. This classification is focused on the behavior of participants toward club service, program service, and area service. The point, in other words, is whether each participant approaches or leaves each service. At the same time, it has been regarded as the level of sports life, and therefore it will be helpful in locating concentrations of influentials and tracing the flow of influence as is examined here. Whether the ranking of sports life strata is appropriate or not, however, is a matter for argument. The position of participant A whose sports life was supported by area service, in this paper, was higher in strata than that of participant P whose sports life was supported by program service.

The statistics used to determine the level of confidence were chi-square. With regard to evaluating the relative importance of various factors for club sports leadership, the measure was given by the following formula:

		characteristic X			
		high	middle	low	
leadership	absent	a ₁	a ₂	a ₃	A
	present	b ₁	b ₂	b ₃	B
		S ₁	S ₂	S ₃	N

$$r^2 = 1 - \frac{\frac{a_1 b_1}{S_1} + \frac{a_2 b_2}{S_2} + \frac{a_3 b_3}{S_3}}{\frac{A B}{N}}$$

This index of correlation was developed by Mosteller and extended by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) to the problem which opinion leadership could either be present or absent.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Fig. 1 shows the distribution of sports life types in the high school days. In nominal distribution, the percentage of students who had been members of sports clubs or circles was the highest(57.4%). The students who had not engaged themselves in any physical activities were no more than 3.9 per cent of the total number of respondents. But, on the other hand, there is no great difference in substance. The proportion of C can be narrowed the lead to others. In the following discussion, substantial types of sports life in the respondents were used.

Table 1 shows the club membership in varying types of sports life. The respondents included 34 students whose sports life type was C, of whom 91.2 per cent were enrollees of sports clubs organized on the campus. At the group of S, only 64.7 per cent were enrollees. And furthermore, when each type of sports life is compared in the predisposition to club sport activity, it appears that C is found to be most positive to trying out for the sports club, as shown in Table 2, followed by A, P and finally S. These differences, however, are not statistically significant.

If the diffusion of innovation is a vertical process, then proportionately more club sports leaders should also be found among clients of higher stratum. Fig. 2 shows the incidences of originators, transmitters and influentials, identified as key communications roles. If experience of club sport activity is the more important qualification, C should have the best chances for club sports leadership.

The concentration of originators, who initiated sports clubs, was among C. The difference between such leadership rates of C and the others is very sharp(41.9% to 5.5%).

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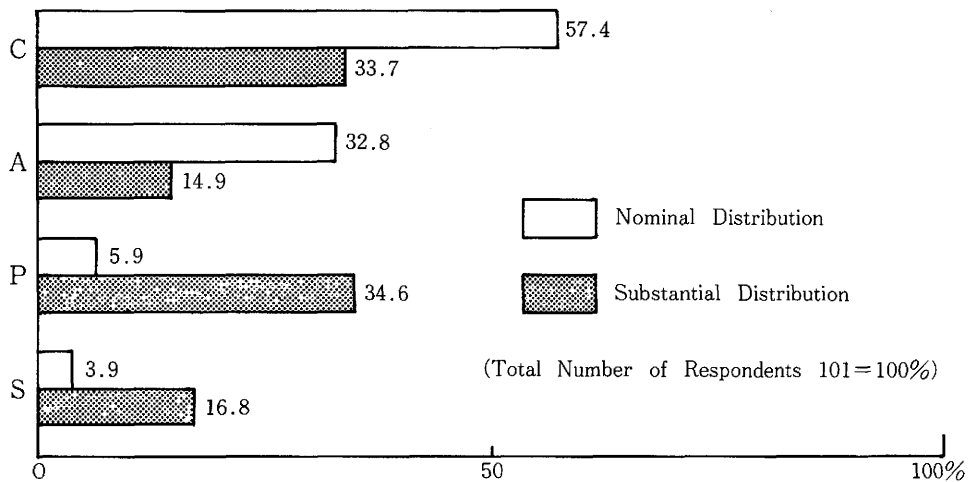


Fig. 1. —Distribution of Sports Life Types in the High School Days.[†]

- † C : One whose sports life was supported by *club service*, or one who engaged himself regularly in physical activity, belonging to a sports club or circle.
A : One whose sports life was supported by *area service*, or one who often utilized sports facility but who belonged to no organizations.
P : One whose sports life was supported by *program service*, or one who only participated in intramurals such as athletic festivals, sports days, or other extracurricular sports events, and who was not attracted by club nor area service.
S : One who *stayed out* of any physical activity.

Table. 1. —Club Membership in Varying Types of Sports Life.

Sports Life Type	Per Cent Who Are Club Members***	Total(=100%)
C	91.2 %	(34)
A	86.7 %	(15)
P	88.6 %	(35)
S	64.7 %	(17)

*** $p < .001$

Table. 2. —Predisposition to Club Sport Activity in Varying Types of Sports Life.

Sports Life Type	Per Cent Who Expected to Try out for the Sports Club	Total(=100%)
C	77.4 %	(31)
A	76.9 %	(13)
P	54.8 %	(31)
S	45.5 %	(11)

$p > .05$

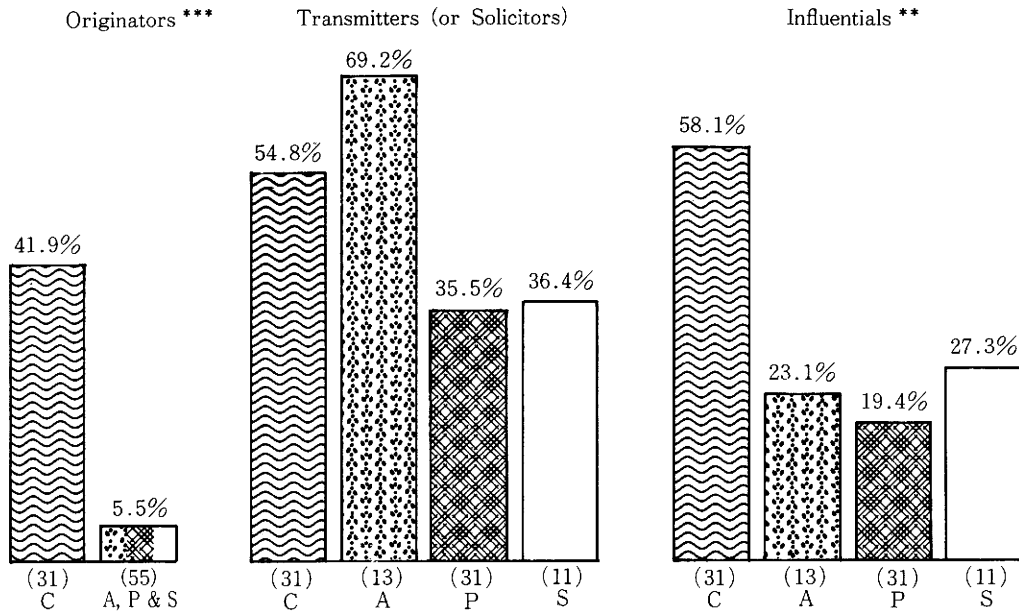


Fig. 2. —Club Sports Leadership Found in Each Type of Sports Life.

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

In considering the transmission of idea (club membership campaign) within the group of students, The data show that A is pointed out the role of a solicitor. But, statistically, there is no significant difference in this data. It may as well be interpreted that such leadership does not parallel sports life types. There are various ways in which a student can be induced or activated or carried forward toward a sport activity by other student. Influentials may, roughly speaking, be defined as persons who maintain involvement in a sport activity and who exert an influence upon client's decision to engage in club sport as is the case here. On the average, students of C are almost twice as likely as those of any other sports life type to be influentials. Among the other sports life types there is little variation with respect to chances for the influentials.

Table 3 depicts the influence of experience in managing sport on initiating a sports club. It is possible that experience as captain or manager will be the more important qualification for originators. The data warrant it to be true.

The influentials, students who presumably influenced the respondents, could be found in the course of probing the relationship of advice-giving or advice-receiving with another student. The data were obtained by means of a nomination by each respondent. All of alleged contacts in inviting a respondent to join a sports club were analyzed in the beginning. There are some differences between designates according to whether they are solicitors

or solicitees. The role evaluations for these two types are depicted in Table 4.

29.4 per cent of the solicitors and 19.8 per cent of the solicitees agreed with the respondents who designated them about the role they played. 5.5 per cent of the solicitors and 7.0 per cent of the solicitees insisted that the designator's statement should have been reversed, and a larger proportion of solicitors(12.8%) than solicitees(8.3%) claimed a peer relationship. Although these differences are not very large and not statistically significant, they suggest that advice-giving designators could not always know how serious the designatee was in receiving the advice. That is to say, it would seem that more reliable data on the influentials should be gathered from advice-receiving designators.

The following results and discussion will be focused on the distinguishing characteristics of the individuals who could induce a respondent to join a sports club.

The distribution of predisposition to club sport activity along the sports life does not necessarily parallel the incidence of leadership(Table 2 and Fig. 2). C was, however, not only more likely to be leader but most positive to trying out for the sports club judging from

Table. 3. —Relationship of Experience in Management of Sport and Initiating a Sports Club.

Experience	Per Cent Who Are Originators*	Total(=100%)
Captains of Sports Teams	40.0 %	(15)
Other Leaders or Managers	19.0 %	(21)
Nonexperienced	9.2 %	(65)

* $p < .05$

Table. 4. —Acknowledgement of Role by Designated Solicitors and Solicitees.

	Solicitors	Solicitees
Role Acknowledged	29.4 %	19.8 %
Role Reversed	5.5	7.0
Mutual Role	12.8	8.3
Not Ascertainable	—	5.7
Contacts Not Confirmed	52.3	59.2
Total (= 100%)	(109)	(157)

$p > .05$

the appearance. If it may be that students' chances for club sports leadership are determined exclusively by the degree of their predispositions, then a comparison of students of differing sports life types who have an equivalent amount of predisposition should reveal an equal incidence of club sports leadership. Table 5 does not bear out this conjecture at all. Only the stratum of C still has higher incidence of influentials(75.0%) except results on the negative predisposition.

Table 6 depicts how much of the club sports leadership which emerges in a given stratum serves members of the same stratum and how much of it exported to other strata. The "export" index introduced into this paper in order to measure inferentially the extent to which influentials serve was proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld(1955). This, of course, presumes that give-and-take of advice on a sport activity tends to be carried on primarily among peers of sports life types, and that positive predisposition would lead to much intra--group advice-seeking and leadership with reference to club sport.

Altogether, 30 of 86 enrollees were influentials, and 56 of the 86 expected to try out

Table. 5. —Incidence of Club Sports Leadership When Predisposition is Controlled.

Predisposition	Per Cent Who Are Influentials			
	C	A	P	S
Positive **	75.0%(24)	20.0%(10)	29.4%(17)	40.0%(5)
Negative	— (7)	33.3%(3)	7.1%(14)	16.7%(6)

** $p < .01$

Table. 6. —Export Index to Measure the Extent to Which Influentials Serve.

Ratio of Club Sports Leadership to Club Sports "Saliency †"	
(The "average" ratio for the entire sample=1.00)	
C	1.39
A	.56
P	.65
S	1.11

† This is the level of predisposition to club sport activity for the sports life strata, and then in a given stratum it will be determined by the proportion of the members who expected to try out for the sports club.

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for the sports club. The ratio 30:56 is .54. C exceeds this average ratio most of all. A and P fall far behind, while S hovers near the average. These results would seem to mean that A and P have not enough leadership in their own ranks to satisfy the amount of predisposition present in their groups, and C has an overabundance of influentials and provides leadership for others. They cannot be treated as more than suggestive. For all practical purposes, the flow of influence in the formative period of sports club groups among sports life strata is described in Table 7.

When influence did cross over from one sports life category to another, there was a greater tendency for it to flow from C to non-C than vice versa. It is evident then that the flow of influence in this arena is characterized by a downward tendency. Although A and P also exported influence despite the data reported in Table 6, the influencees(designators) were C invariably. The advice circulations between them, moreover, were almost two-way transaction(80.0%) in which the influencee was on an equal footing with the influential, as shown in Table 8. It seems that the homogeneity of sports life between influential and influencee(horizontal influence) is more important than such a upward tendency in vertical influence.

In addition, there often appears to be not confirmed the contacts by influentials(designatees) when influencees are non-C(Table 8). A pattern of influence transaction in which behavior of an individual is imitated, though he does not attempt to transmit influence, may be considered in this case.

Table. 7. —Cross Tabulation of Sports Life for 47 Influencees and Their Influentials.

Influential ††	Influencee †				Totals
	C	A	P	S	
C	11	6	13	3	33
A	2	2	—	—	4
P	3	—	4	—	7
S	—	—	1	2	3
Totals	16	8	18	5	47

† = Designator

†† = Designatee

Table. 8. —Patterns of Influence Transactions in Entrance into a Sports Club.

	Direction of the Flow of Influence			
	C ↓ C	C ↓ Non-C	Non-C ↓ C	Non-C ↓ Non-C
Confirmed Contacts	81.8 %	68.2 %	80.0 %	44.4 %
One-Way Transaction	63.6 %	50.0 %	—	44.4 %
Two-Way Transaction**	18.2	18.2	80.0 %	—
Contacts Not Confirmed	18.2 %	31.8 %	20.0 %	55.6 %
Total (=100%)	(11)	(22)	(5)	(9)

** $p < .01$

Fig. 3 shows the relation between incidence of influentials and various factors. Students who had positive predisposition (who were applicants for admission into a sports club) are five times more likely to be influentials than those who had negative predisposition. Gregariousness score was simply constructed by the number of friends in the high school days. The median number of friends named by the respondents is nine. This figure was employed as a norm for grouping students into two classes. Influentials are found in almost equal numbers on the two classes.

On a sociometric questionnaire, all of respondents were asked to designate the sports-mate with whom they would like to be friendly, within the limits of learning group in physical education. Consequently, index of choice status (CSi) and index of positive expansiveness (PEi), proposed by Proctor and Loomis (1951), or Jennings (1950), were obtained as traits of each respondent within the group. On the other hand, frequency of advice-receiving and advice-giving for entrance into a sports club had also been measured. Choice status as a sportsmate arranged in Fig. 3 is a combination of CSi with frequency of advice-receiving. The high status means that both CSi and advice-receiving are better than average, and that there is a high degree of probability of being popular among the students as regards sport. Only the low status group has fewer influentials. When PEi and frequency of advice-giving are combined into one scale, it will be shown as emotional expansiveness for sportsmates. The broad expansiveness means that both PEi and advice-giving are better than average, and that there is a high degree of probability of choosing a sportsmate more broadly from the students. Club sports leadership increases with increasing such expansiveness.

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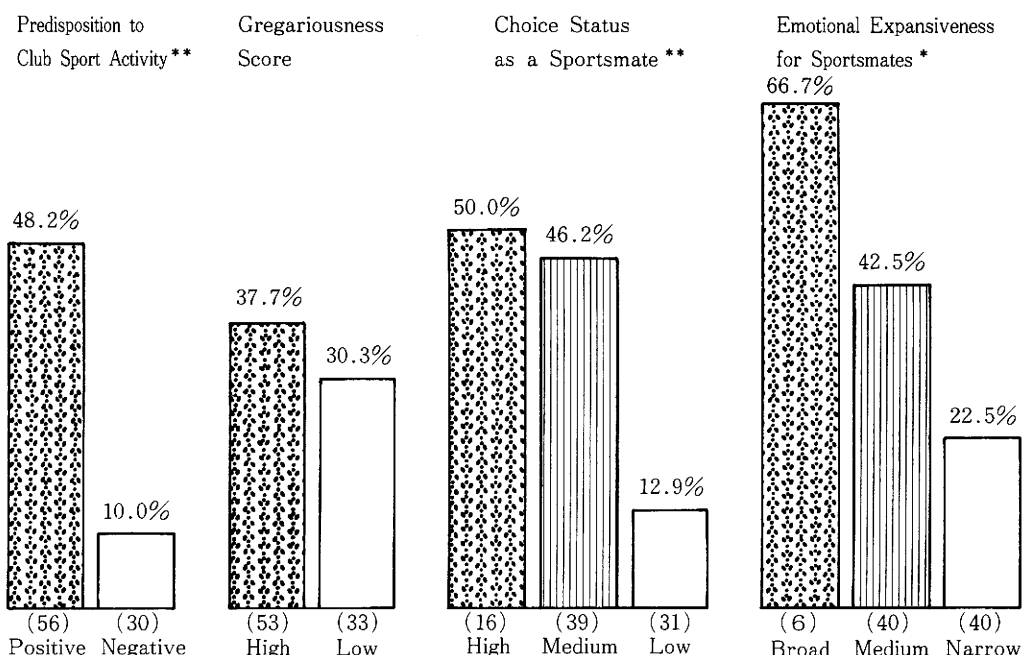


Fig. 3.—Determinants of Influential's Identity Other Than Sports Life Type.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

It might be interesting to consider the combined effects of these four factors and sports life type on a student's chance for leadership, as shown in Table 9. C have a better than average chance to be leaders in club sport, if they have positive predisposition and if they are at least moderate in choice status and emotional expansiveness, whatever their gregariousness. So far as non-C is concerned, a high probability of being chosen as a sportsmate and a broad choice of sportsmates are necessary conditions for a good chance at club sports leadership.

Table 10 shows the extent to which each of the four factors except gregariousness is important for three arenas of influence. Reading down the columns, the table permits a comparison, for each arena, of relative importance of each of the four factors. It shows, for instance, that predisposition is the most important factor for club sports leadership in the whole sample. Sports life type is the most significant factor in dual sports such as tennis, badminton, kendo, judo, and so on. In team sports(e.g. basketball, baseball, Rugby football, &c.) and conquest sports(e.g. cycling, Wandervogel, &c.), these two factors are less important than the other factors and a major key to the concentration of club sports leadership is choice status as a sportsmate instead. The information in this table is very inadequate as concerns the number of respondents in the sub-samples in order to read across

Table. 9. —Better-Than-Average Chances for Club Sports Leadership
According to Sports Life Type and Other Factors. †

	Sports Life Type
	C Non-C
Predisposition	
Positive	×
Negative	
Gregariousness	
High	×
Low	×
Choice Status	
High	×
Medium	×
Low	
Emotional Expansiveness	
Broad	×
Medium	×
Narrow	

† "Better than average chance" refers to any group where the ratio of leaders exceeds the average in the sample as a whole. In this table, those groups of students who have a better than average chance to be influentials are identified by an "x".

Table. 10. —Index of Importance of Various Factors for Club Sports Leadership. †

	Dual Sports	Team Sports	Conquest Sports	Whole Sample
Sports Life Type	.382	.277	.632	.365
Predisposition	.352	.119	.707	.382
Choice Status	.272	.472	1.000	.348
Emotional Expansiveness	.310	.347	.707	.272

† An index value of 0 would indicate that a given factor is totally irrelevant for club sports leadership in a given area; an index value of 1 would indicate that club sports leadership in the area is completely accounted for by the given factor.

the rows.

The central problem, thus far, was to find out attributes of club sports leaders. In order to gain further insight into the workings of personal influence associate with entrance into a sports club, it seems advisable to investigate afresh the role of personal contacts, which necessitates being assessed by advice-receiving designators involve influencees. Fig. 4 presents an evaluation of the relative roles of C, A, P and S on decisions to join the sports club.

The most prominent item in this figure is the fact that the greatest concentration of effective exposure is to be found among enrollees solicited by C. 47.7 per cent of all those who were enrollees reported some manner of solicitation from C. 38.4 per cent of enrollees were effectively exposed to C and the source was the most important factor in their decision. 9.3 per cent do not acknowledge that the source played any role in their decision. The difference between 47.7 per cent and 100 per cent(52.3%) represents those enrollees who were not exposed to C at all. Since what appears as the greater effectiveness of C may reflect nothing more than the greater coverage of C, a measure which holds coverage constant must be considered in order to compare the relative effectiveness of the different sources regardless of the amount of exposure to each. Such an index of effectiveness might simply

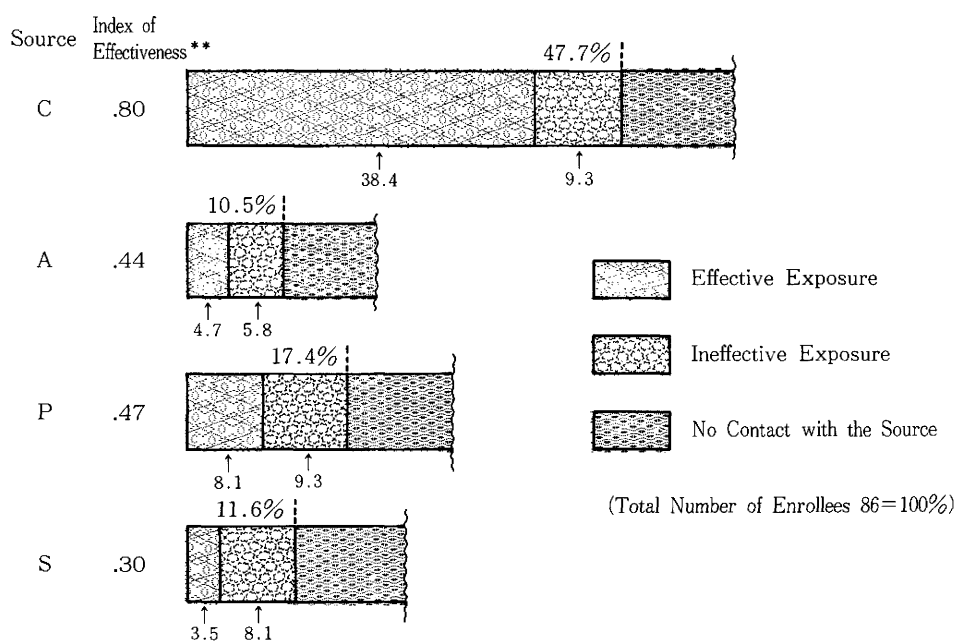


Fig. 4. —Assessment Results for Entrance into a Sports Club.

** $p < .01$

be the ratio of effective exposure to a particular source to total exposure to that source. According to this index, the impact of C is greater than the impact of A, P or S.

Table 11 shows the assessment results for entrance into a sports club among C and non-C. It is especially conspicuous that C plays an important role to non-C. Not only the total exposure(30.2%) but the relative effectiveness(.85) is greatest. The flow from C to C has greater effectiveness(.73), too. The flow from non-C to C is less important than any of the other directions.

Fig. 5 shows the impact of personal contacts in varying types of sports life. Effective exposure in this figure is somewhat different from that in Fig. 4. Inferentially the students who expected to try out for the sports club are more open to persuasion. Therefore, the difference in effectiveness of personal contact is required further examination by means of discriminating whether each of enrollees had positive predisposition or not. On the basis of such discrimination it is possible to distinguish in each case between a contributory influence and an effective influence. Contributory exposure may be interpreted that enrollees mention a solicitation, claiming that it played a specific role, but they do not call it the most important factor in their decision.

Although there was no significant difference in contributory exposure among C, A, P and S, a considerable difference was brought about in effective exposure. Whereas 9.4 per cent of enrollees in the first bar(C) who named personal contact in their decisions were assessed as having been effectively exposed, in the fourth bar(S) 60.0 per cent experienced effective exposure. In the middle of bars the impact of personal contacts was assessed by

Table. 11. —Assessment Results for Entrance into a Sports Club Among C and Non-C.

Source and Measure	Sports Life Type of Enrollee	
	C	Non-C
Contacts with C		
Total Exposure	17.4 %	30.2 %
Index of Effectiveness**	.73	.85
Contacts with Non-C		
Total Exposure	19.8 %	19.8 %
Index of Effectiveness**	.29	.53

** $p < .01$ (total table)

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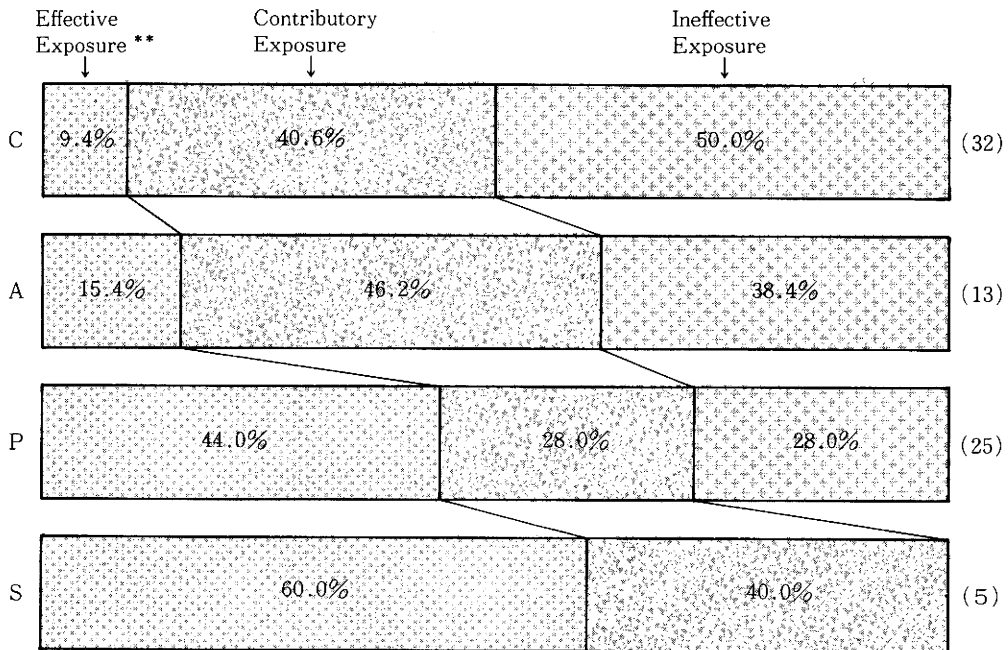


Fig. 5. —Impact of Personal Contacts in Varying Types of Sports Life.

** $p < .01$

Table. 12. —Relationship of Influencees, Influentials and Originators.

Influencee	Names Originator as Influential	Does Not
Is Named as Influential	50.0 %	29.6 %
Isn't Named as Influential	50.0	70.4
Total (=100%)	(20)	(27)

$p > .05$

A, in comparison with P, to be less important. In short, demand for club sports leadership increases with the less active sections of the clients.

Table 12 shows the relationship of influencees, influentials and originators. These data suggest that those students who name a originator as influential are more likely to be influential themselves than those who do not. The difference, however, is not statistically significant.

SUMMARY

The results may be summarized in the following way:

(1) The concentration of club sports leadership is among the students whose sports life in the high school days was supported by club service and they are more likely to function as influential persons who can induce others to join a sports club.

(2) The influence flows from them to the less active strata of the students. In other words, it may be inferred that the influentials of this sports life type satisfy not only their own stratum's leadership needs but are attractive as sources of influence to members of other strata as well.

(3) In considering the determinants of influential's identity other than sports life type, there is indication that the students who have positive predisposition to club sport activity, a high probability of being chosen as a sportsmate and a broad choice of sportsmates may play the part of influentials in the formative period of sports club groups. Especially the latter two factors(choice status as a sportsmate and emotional expansiveness for sportsmates) are sufficiently important to be determinants, despite the fact that sports life type is an attribute of a club sports leader.

(4) It is possible that different arenas of influence will call different assortments of these factors into play—that is, leadership in dual sports is strongly related to sports life type, while leadership in team or conquest sports is related primarily to choice status as a sportsmate.

(5) Demand for club sports leadership increases with the less active sections of the clients. Namely it may have to make contact with an appropriate influential in order that a student whose sports life has not been supported by club service may join a sports club.

Results of this study are far from being conclusive. They provide a starting point for setting up guidelines for further corroborative research. If attention is focused on the client's behavior in community sports club, more complicated circumstances behind the interpersonal networks must be considered. It is emphasized that the influentials as were found in this study do not always exist in various groups of the population. So, it would hope to take a new look at where the power of the club sports leader in community which finds expression in informal persuasion and friendly influence might derive from.

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